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AULD ROBIN GRAY;

A BALLAD.

BY THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE LADY ANNE BARNARD,

BORN LADY ANNE LINDSAY OF BALCARRAS.



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THE
FIRST AUTHENTIC EDITION
OF
THIS BEAUTIFUL SCOTTISH BALLAD.
IS
MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED
TO
THE BANNATYNE CLUB,
BY
WALTER SCOTT.

INTRODUCTION.

THE beautiful and long-contested ballad of “Auld Robin Gray” was well known to the Editor, from a very early period of his life, as the production of Lady Anne Lindsay of Balcarras ; in whose name it is now formally claimed. Mrs Russell, wife of Lieutenant-Colonel Russell of Ashesteil, and maternal aunt of the Editor, was upon a visit at the house of Balcarras when it was written ; and, as a most intimate friend of the fair Authoress, was admitted to her confidence while it was in the course of being composed. Mrs Russell sang beautifully, and with much feeling ; and it may easily be supposed, that “Auld Robin Gray” was often her choice. Whatever secrecy she might at first think proper to observe, the name of the real Authoress was not withheld at a later period, when attempts were made to deprive

her friend Lady Anne of her just fame. In fact, most of her domestic circle became acquainted with the particulars, and amongst others the present Editor.

This circumstance, joined, perhaps, to a continuance of regard, which may be termed hereditary, induced Lady Anne to distinguish the Editor by imparting to him the following interesting account of the origin of "Auld Robin Gray," contained in a letter dated — July, 1823, in which, after mentioning that the Editor was the first person whom she had favoured with such an explanation, her Ladyship proceeds thus :—

“ ‘Robin Gray,’ so called from its being the name of the old herd at Balcarras, was born soon after the close of the year 1771. My sister Margaret had married, and accompanied her husband to London ; I was melancholy, and endeavoured to amuse myself by attempting a few poetical trifles. There was an ancient Scotch melody, of which I was passionately fond : — —, who lived before your day, used to sing it to us at Balcarras. She did not object to its having improper words, though I did. I longed to sing old Sophy’s air to different words, and give to its plaintive tones some little history of virtuous distress in humble life, such as might suit it. While attempting to effect this

in my closet, I called to my little sister, now Lady Hardwicke, who was the only person near me, ‘ I have been writing a ballad, my dear ; I am oppressing my heroine with many misfortunes. I have already sent her Jamie to sea—and broken her father’s arm—and made her mother fall sick—and given her Auld Robin Gray for her lover ; but I wish to load her with a fifth sorrow within the four lines, poor thing ! Help me to one.’—‘ Steal the cow, sister Anne,’ said the little Elizabeth. The cow was immediately *lifted* by me, and the song completed. At our fire-side, and amongst our neighbours, ‘ Auld Robin Gray’ was always called for. I was pleased in secret with the approbation it met with ; but such was *my dread* of being suspected of writing *anything*, perceiving the shyness it created in those who could write *nothing*, that I carefully kept my own secret.

“ Happening to sing it one day at Dalkeith-House, with more feeling perhaps than belonged to a common ballad, our friend Lady Frances Scott smiled, and fixing her eyes on me, said, ‘ *You* wrote this song yourself.’ The blush that followed confirmed my *guilt*. Perhaps I blushed the more (being then very young) from the recollection of the coarse words from which I borrowed the tune, and was

afraid of the raillery which might have taken place if it had been discovered I had ever heard such. Be that as it may, from one honest man I had an excellent hint. The Laird of Dalziel, after hearing it, broke out into the angry exclamation of, ‘O the villain! O the auld rascal! I ken wha stealt the poor lassie’s coo—it was Auld Robin Gray himsell.’ I thought it a bright idea, and treasured it up for a future occasion. Meantime, little as this matter seems to have been worthy of a dispute, it afterwards became a party question between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. ‘Robin Gray’ was either a very very ancient ballad, composed perhaps by David Rizzio, and a great curiosity, or a very very modern matter, and no curiosity at all. I was persecuted to avow whether I had written it or not—where I had got it. Old Sophy kept my counsel, and I kept my own, in spite of the gratification of seeing a reward of twenty guineas offered in the newspapers to the person who should ascertain the point past a doubt, and the still more flattering circumstance of a visit from Mr Jerningham, secretary to the Antiquarian Society, who endeavoured to entrap the truth from me in a manner I took amiss. Had he asked me the question obligingly, I should have told him the fact distinctly and confidentially. The annoyance, how-

ever, of this important ambassador from the Antiquaries, was amply repaid to me by the noble exhibition of the 'Ballad of Auld Robin Gray's Courtship,' as performed by dancing-dogs under my window. It proved its popularity from the highest to the lowest, and gave me pleasure while I hugged myself in my obscurity.

.. Such was the history of the first part of it. As to the second, it was written many years after, in compliment to my dear old mother, who said, 'Anny, I wish you would tell me how that unlucky business of Jenny and Jamie ended.' To meet her wishes as far as I could, the Second Part was written. It is not so pleasing as the First; the early loves and distresses of youth go more to the heart than the contritions, confessions, and legacies of old age. My dread, however, of being named as an Authoress still remaining, though I sung it to my mother, I gave her no copy of it; but her affection for me impressed it on a memory which retained scarcely anything else. I wrote another version of the Second Part, as coming from Jenny's own lips, which some people may like better, from its being in the same measure.

.. I must also mention the Laird of Dalziel's advice, who, in a *tête-à-tête*, afterwards said, 'My dear, the next time you sing that song, try to change the words a wee bit, and in-

stead of singing, ‘ To make the crown a pound, my Jamie gaed to sea,’ say, to make it twenty merks, for a Scottish pund is but twenty pence, and Jamie was na such a gowk as to leave Jenny and gang to sea to lessen his gear. It is that line [whispered he] that tells me that sang was written by some bonnie lassie that didna ken the value of the Scots money quite so well as an auld writer in the town of Edinburgh would have kent it.’

“ I was delighted with the criticism of old Dalziel : if it had occurred to the Antiquarian Society, it might have saved Mr Jerningham the trouble of his visit. But I have never corrected the error by *changing* the one pound, which has always passed current in its present state.”

The Editor has retained both the copies of the Continuation, the poetical beauty of which cannot be disputed, although some readers may be of opinion, notwithstanding Dalziel’s criticism, that taking away Robin Gray’s honest fame, rather injures the simplicity of the original tale, where all are rendered miserable by no evil passions or culpable conduct on any side, but by a source of distress arising out of the best and most amiable feelings of all parties.

The Editor also dissents from Dalziel’s opinion concerning the amount of the *pund* mentioned, by Jamie’s living

in the commercial county of Fife, in which county alone a Scottish peasant would have thought of mending his fortune by going to sea. The poor lover might be acquainted with the pound sterling, and enlarge his views even to the acquisition of that sum.

AULD ROBIN GRAY.

I.

WHEN the sheep are in the fauld, when the cows come hame,
When a' the weary world to quiet rest are gane,
The woes of my heart fa' in showers frae my ee,
Unken'd by my gudeman, who soundly sleeps by me.

II.

Young Jamie loo'd me weel, and sought me for his bride ;
But saving ae crown-piece, he'd naething else beside.
To make the crown a pound, my Jamie gaed to sea ;
And the crown and the pound, oh ! they were baith for me !

III.

Before he had been gane a twelvemonth and a day,
My father brak his arm, our cow was stown away ;
My mother she fell sick—my Jamie was at sea—
And Auld Robin Gray, oh ! he came a-courting me.

IV.

My father cou'dna work—my mother cou'dna spin ;
I toil'd day and night, but their bread I cou'dna win ;
Auld Rob maintain'd them baith, and, wi' tears in his ee,
Said, “ Jenny, oh ! for their sakes, will you marry me ?”

V.

My heart it said na, and I look'd for Jamie back ;
 But hard blew the winds, and his ship was a wrack :
 His ship it was a wrack ! Why didna Jenny dee ?
 Or, wherefore am I spared to cry out, Woe is me !

VI.

My father argued sair—my mother didna speak,
 But she look'd in my face till my heart was like to break :
 They gied him my hand, but my heart was in the sea ;
 And so Auld Robin Gray, he was gudeman to me.

VII.

I hadna been his wife, a week but only four,
 When mournfu' as I sat on the stane at my door,
 I saw my Jamie's ghaist—I cou'dna think it he,
 Till he said, " I'm come hame, my love, to marry thee !"

VII.

O sair, sair did we greet, and mickle say of a' ;
 Ae kiss we took, nae mair—I bad him gang awa.
 I wish that I were dead, but I'm no like to dee ;
 For O, I am but young to cry out, Woe is me !

IX.

I gang like a ghaist, and I carena much to spin ;
 I darena think o' Jamie, for that wad be a sin.
 But I will do my best a gude wife aye to be,
 For auld Robin Gray, oh ! he is sae kind to me.

CONTINUATION OF AULD ROBIN GRAY.

I.

THE spring had pass'd over, 'twas summer nae mair,
And trembling were scatter'd the leaves in the air :
“ Oh, winter !” said Jenny, “ we kindly agree,
For wae looks the sun when he shines upon me.”

II.

Nae langer she wept, her tears were a' spent—
Despair it had come, and she thought it content ;
She thought it content, but her cheek was grown pale,
And she droop'd like a lily bent down by the hail

III.

Her father was sad, and her mother was wae,
But silent and thoughtfu' was Auld Robin Gray ;
He wander'd his lane, and his face look'd as lean
As the side of a brae where the torrents have been.

IV.

He gaed to his bed, but nae physie wou'd take,
And often he said, “ It is best, for her sake.”
While Jenny supported his head as he lay,
Her tears trickled down upon Auld Robin Gray.

V.

“ O, greet nae mair, Jenny,” said he, wi’ a groan ;
 “ I’m no worth your sorrow—the truth maun be known !
 Send round for our neighbours ; my hour it draws near,
 And I’ve that to tell that it’s fit a’ should hear.

VI.

“ I’ve wrong’d her,” he said, “ but I kent it o’er late ;
 I’ve wrong’d her, and sorrow is speeding my date.
 But a’s for the best, since my death will soon free
 A faithfu’ young heart, that was ill match’d wi’ me.

VII.

“ I loved and I courted her mony a day ;
 The auld folks were for me, but still she said nae.
 I kentna o’ Jamie, nor yet of her vow ;
 In mercy forgive me !—’twas I stole the cow !

VIII.

“ I cared not for Crummie ; I thought but o’ thee !
 I thought it was Crummie stood ’twixt you and me.
 While she fed your parents, oh ! did you not say,
 You never would marry wi’ Auld Robin Gray ?

IX.

“ But sickness at hame, and want at the door,
 You gied me your hand, while your heart it was sore.
 I saw it was sore—why took I her hand ?
 Oh ! that was a deed to cry shame o’er the land.

X.

“ But truth, soon or late, it comes ever to light ;
 For Jamie came back, and your cheek it grew white.
 White, white grew your cheek, but aye true unto me ;
 Oh, Jenny, I'm thankfu'—I'm thankfu' to dee !

XI.

“ Is Jamie come here yet ?” and Jamie they saw.
 “ I've injured you sair, lad, so leave you my a' ;
 Be kind to my Jenny, and soon may it be !
 Waste nae time, my dauties, in mourning for me.”

XII.

They kiss'd his cauld hands ; and a smile o'er his face
 Seem'd hopeful of being accepted by grace :
 “ Oh, doubtna,” said Jamie, “ forgi'en he will be ;
 Wha wou'dna be tempted, my love, to win thee ?”

* * * * *

XIII.

The first days were dowie while time slipp'd awa ;
 Though saddest and sairest to Jenny of a',
 Was fearing she cou'dna be honest and right,
 Wi' tears in her ee, while her heart was sae light.

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XIV.

But nae guile had she, and her sorrows away,
 The wife of her Jamie—the tears cou'dna stay.
 A bonnie wee bairn—the auld folks by the fire ;—
 O now she has a' that her heart can desire.

SECOND CONTINUATION OF AULD ROBIN GRAY.

Sung by Jenny, softly, at her wheel.

I.

THE wintry days grew lang, my tears they were a' spent ;
 May be it was despair I fancied was content.
 They said my cheek was wan ; I cou'dna look to see—
 For, oh ! the wee bit glass, my Jamie gaed it me.

II.

My father he was sad, my mother dull and wae ;
 But that which grieved me maist, it was Auld Robin Gray ;
 Though ne'er a word he said, his cheek said mair than a',
 It wasted like a brae o'er which the torrents fa'.

III.

He gaed into his bed—nae physie wad he take ;
 And oft he moan'd, and said, " It's better, for her sake."
 At length he look'd upon me, and call'd me his " ain dear,"
 And beckon'd round the neighbours, as if his hour drew near.

IV.

" I've wrong'd her sair," he said, " but kent the truth o'er late ;"
 Its grief for that alone that hastens now my date.
 But a' is for the best, since death will shortly free
 A young and faithful heart that was ill match'd wi' me.

V.

“ I loo’d, and sought to win her for mony a lang day ;
 I had her parents’ favour, but still she said me nay.
 I knew na Jamie’s luvè ; and oh ! it’s sair to tell—
 To force her to be mine, I steal’d her cow mysel !

VI.

“ O what cared I for Crummie ! I thought of nought but thee.
 I thought it was the cow stood ’twixt my luvè and me.
 While she maintain’d ye a’, was you not heard to say,
 That you wad never marry wi’ Auld Robin Gray ?

VII.

“ But sickness in the house, and hunger at the door
 My bairn gied me her hand, although her heart was sore
 I saw her heart was sore—why did I take her hand ?
 That was a sinfu’ deed ! to blast a bonnie land.

VIII.

“ It wasna very lang ere a’ did come to light ;
 For Jamie he came back, and Jenny’s cheek grew white.
 My spouse’s cheek grew white, but true she was to me ;
 Jenny ! I saw it a’—and oh, I’m glad to dee !

IX.

“ Is Jamie come ?” he said ; and Jamie by us stood—
 “ Ye loo each other weel—Oh, let me do some good !
 I gie you a’, young man—my houses, cattle, kync,
 And the dear wife hersel, that ne’er should hae been mine.”

X.

We kiss'd his clay-cold hands—a smile came o'er his face :
“ He's pardon'd,” Jamie said, “ before the throne o' grace.
Oh, Jenny ! see that smile—forgi'en I'm sure is he,
Wha could withstand temptation when hoping to win thee !”

XI.

The days at first were dowie ; but what was sad and sair,
While tears were in my ee, I kent mysel nae mair ;
For, oh ! my heart was light as ony bird that flew,
And, wae as a' thing was, it had a kindly hue.

XII.

But sweeter shines the sun than e'er he shone before,
For now I'm Jamie's wife, and what need I say more ?
We hae a wee bit bairn—the anld folks by the fire—
And Jamie, oh ! he loo's me up to my heart's desire.

